



# Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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## OVR Policy & State Plan / Customer Satisfaction Committee Minutes for January 24, 2023

### Members Present (P)

### Not Present (NP)

William Del Toro Vargas (P)  
Robert Wallington (NP)  
Lynn Heitz (P)

Michelle Paonessa (P)  
Julia Grant Barol (P)  
Jessica Keogh (P)

Paul Fogle (P)  
Susan Tomasic (P)

**Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present:** James Whitonis, Cheryl Novak, Lee Ann Stewart, Danielle Schmidgall, Jennifer Radick, Julie Jindra, Jeff Seabury, Audrey O'Conner

**Project Staff Present:** Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

**Interpreters Present:** Ashley Shenk

### CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Ms. Lynn Heitz called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

### ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions.

### APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

***MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to approve today's agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Susan Tomasic seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:

**OVR Review of Process and Timeline for Developing the 2024-2028 State Plan and Collaboration on the State Goals and Priorities / Council Authorship of Description A**

- Mr. James Whitonis provided an overview of the timeline and preparation for the process of developing the 2024 to 2028 State Plan.
  - OVR Executive Team has met to review the process and begin thinking about the goals to be included in the plan considering the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) report.
  - In February will be meeting with plan contributors of Descriptions (b) through (q) and providing those assignments.
  - In March a date will be determined for OVR Executive Team to meet with the PaRC Executive Committee / Policy Committee members, and the Client Assistance Program (CAP) to discuss State Plan goals and review PaRC's work on Description (a). Mr. Paul Fogle noted that a Public Notice Ad will need to be posted for this meeting.
  - A rough draft of the VR Services Portion of the Plan (Descriptions (a) thru (q)) will need to be completed by April. The Council will then be able to review and vote on Description (a) and (l).
  - By August the rough draft of the VR Services Portion of the Plan should then be ready to present to the State Board of VR, CAP, and PaRC.
  - By November all Public Meetings, Public Comment Period, and associated changes should be addressed and completed within the Workforce Development Board's (WDB) timeline as it is included within the PA WIOA Combined State Plan.
  - In December the State Board of VR should provide final approval of the VR Services Portion followed by the Public Comment Period of the Combined State Plan. In January and February of 2024, the WDB will finalize public comment and provide final approval of The Combined State Plan.
  - In March of 2024 State Plan will be submitted to Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for review, with the expectation of a final approval by June 2024 or earlier from RSA and the U.S. Department of Labor.
- Ms. Heitz asked what specifically the PaRC Policy Committee is responsible for regarding the State Plan.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart and Mr. Whitonis explained that the Council will be providing their recommendations as part of Description (a) which is authored by the PaRC. This has always been a very important Council responsibility, OVR has made adjustments based upon recommendations included in Description (a), and a lot of positive impact has been provided by this work. Under number one, the sources used are very important and include PaRC Annual Report, Customer Satisfaction Surveys, past recommendations, and CSNA. Section one will require any updates for dates and section two will be developed by the Council and OVR will subsequently develop a response to those recommendations.
- Members agreed the process to develop the Description (a) should begin with the Policy Committee, be open to other Council members to provide input, provide this information during the Full Council meeting, target is to have a rough draft by April, and requested previous State Plan to compare Council input.
- OVR staff explained they will provide the previous State Plan Description (a), those are also posted on the WIOA website, prior to 2016 State Plan the state was not

operating under the current 4-year plan system / Combined State Plan that now operates under Workforce Development.

## **OVR Updates**

### **On-the-Job Training Policy**

### **Additional Policies / Workgroups**

- Ms. Jennifer Radick reported that she will be providing a more in-depth informational report on OVR Benefits Counseling during the upcoming Full Council (FC) meeting and asked members to provide suggestions for any topics they would like included in the informational report. Continue to use WIPA when appropriate and have updated OVR Benefits Counseling Provider Agreement. Updated Provider Agreement was sent out in July of 2022, currently have approved 8 providers that are serving customers throughout the Commonwealth which includes 32 counselors. 4 providers are working to get approval from OVR. OVR has also engaged in additional outreach efforts for obtaining providers. Each county has 4 providers to choose from. One provider provides services to customers who are deaf and hard of hearing in all 67 counties. Another provider for the deaf and hard of hearing is in the approval process. Another provider has certification to work with youth.
- Mr. Fogle inquired about the difference between WIPA and other services. Inquired if a customer can be enrolled in both.
- Ms. Radick explained she will provide more info about WIPA and Ticket to Work during the FC meeting and that WIPA provides benefits counseling to individuals with disabilities who are receiving Social Security benefits. OVR also has a Provider Agreement that enables them to provide benefits counseling to individuals that may not meet the WIPA required categories. Individuals can qualify for both WIPA and other benefits counseling services and will go into more detail on that in February.
- Ms. Danielle Schmidgall reported that the Driving and Vehicle Services Policy will be going to Public Comment from January 30, 2023, to February 28, 2023. Public meetings are scheduled for February 16, 2023, in the morning and afternoon via Zoom. The draft will be reviewed with Full Council on February 15<sup>th</sup>. Policy draft and a few supporting documents will be available for member review.
- Ms. Heitz inquired if the policy deals with vehicle modifications and customer's use of the vehicle modifications.
- Ms. Schmidgall reported that the policy deals with both adaptive and non-adaptive driving services, which would be learning to drive with and without adaptive equipment. Bioptics is not included in this policy, it is separate because of the rules provided by Penn DOT.
- OVR staff has been informed by their legal department that they should not include information about Bioptics in their own policy because Penn DOT already has a policy related to that at a State level.
- Ms. Julie Jindra provided an update on the revisions made to the On-the-Job Training (OJT) Policy. Apprenticeship has been changed to be a permanent program, other programs have been more clearly defined and include the internship OJT, and non-permanent OJT. Other forms have been revised and included into the policy to provide an explanation for counselors, attachments and screenshots have been

removed that had no procedural value. Mr. Jeff added the effort was to streamline and make the utilization of OJT more efficient. Counselors have expanded use of OJT and provided information to make it a better process for effectively serving customers.

- Ms. Heitz received the Financial Needs Test (FNT) policy and inquired if it has been passed. Inquired if there are revisions to the Audiological Policy.
- Ms. Novak reported the FNT is still pending, temporary changes have already been put in place, and work on the policy will resume after the next State Board meeting. The Audiological Policy workgroup is in the early stages of development process.

## **Adjourn**

***MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to adjourn. Ms. Susan Tomasic seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.***